

Dirty Harry: note the cinematic déjà vu in the background.



1

INSP. HARRY CALLAHAN (Clint Eastwood) *Dirty Harry*

So you thought Roger Rogerson was a nasty piece of work? Meet San Francisco's finest example of the ideal "an eye for an eye". With his trusty .44 Magnum rarely out of sight, Harry will do anything, anytime. Got a

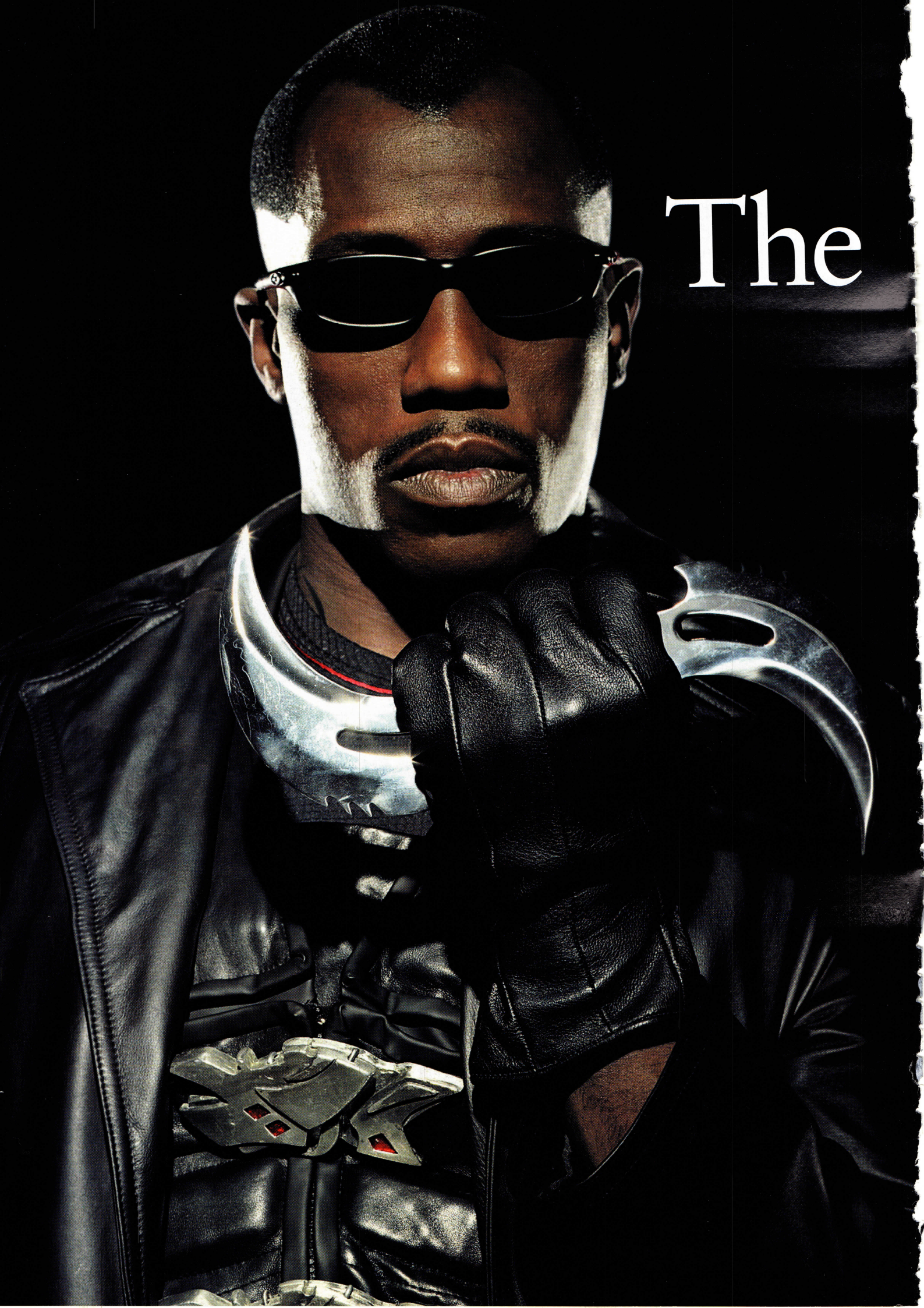
problem with a peeping tom? Callahan's there. Got an entire unit of crooked vigilante cops? Just give "Dirty" Harry (he earned his nickname by doing the jobs nobody else would tackle) a motorbike and it's sorted. Just another day at the office for Callahan can involve riding on the roof of a hijacked bus, taxiing a jumbo jet, falling out of moving cars, swearing at mayors, firing rocket-launchers at hippies on Alcatraz, getting shot at (usually around lunchtime), and still being savvy enough to work out that there's a hold-up in progress from the amount of sugar in his coffee.

"With his .44 Magnum rarely out of sight, Harry will do anything, anytime."

A man who shoots rapists on the ground that "When a man is chasing a woman with a butcher's knife and a hard-on, I figure he isn't out collecting for the Red Cross!" he's 24-7 to the extent that he doesn't know what a holiday is. As for sick days? What does "sick" mean? When the chips are down, and "punks" are tearing up the city streets there's only one man tough enough to do the job. Harry Callahan, may the force be with you. ♦

"On your marks..."

The



Dead must die. Again.



Stuff Buffy – the most dangerous man in movies is back, and he wants blood.

WORDS MARK DINNING

Kiefer Sutherland, a bottle of Bud in one hand, Cherie the lapdancer in the other, is having a vivid flashback. “Yeah man, I remember that night,” he says. “Me and Luke were just sinking a couple of quiet beers when, before we knew it, these two huge hockey players started giving us attitude. I started giving a little back, but Luke soon reined me in. Which was probably a good thing in retrospect.”

Cherie runs her fingers through his hair, caressing the nape of his neck. “But, baby,” she says, “you’re a big guy, at least 5’ 11” – you could have taken care of yourself.” Sutherland smiles at the sentiment. “Well thanks,” he says. “But actually I’m only 5’ 10”.

“I know because they measured me when I last got arrested.”

Quite what, you may wonder, does all this have to do with *Blade II*? Well, for one thing, this particular late-night soirée – in legendary L.A. strip joint, Crazy Girls – has followed an arduous day of promotion for the all-action sequel to one of the best action movies of recent memory. And, for another, the Luke in question is Goss, previously a third of proto-boyband Bros and currently essaying a scary-ass villain in the aforesaid sequel.

“The scuffle with the hockey players happened in a bar in Prague [*the main location for Blade II*],” explains Goss. “We’d finished filming for the day, so I’d gone out to grab myself a cold one. All of a sudden, I saw Kiefer Sutherland at the bar. We got talking, and then these guys muscled in. I was like, ‘Kiefer, son, I think it’s time to leave.’”

That Goss should have run into the wayward *Lost Boy* (in Prague, you may gather, for reasons other than shooting *Blade II*, one vamp movie he doesn’t appear in) and shared

respective vampire anecdotes and a number of Pilsner Urquells, is, of course, as much of a bizarre coincidence as our happening upon him this evening, and sharing strippers and a number of Budweisers. It is also, though, fairly typical of the stories that have emanated from the set of *Blade II* ever since it started shooting, some seven months ago, in the Czech Republic. Girls, absinthe, cheap beer, Wesley Snipes's infamous "villa parties". All were as key, it would seem, to the *Blade II* experience as buckets of blood and big teeth.

"It got a touch intense at times," says Goss. "But I only got involved in that side of things after a while. When I first got out there, there was no socialising at all for me, because I had 10 weeks of boxing, karate and combat training to do to get myself down to only 5 per cent body fat. Fine, so my make-up was out of this world, but if I was going to look like a convincing bad guy, then I had to entirely change my old image."

And do so he does, turning in a genuinely creepy performance as Blade's new nemesis, Nomak (the leader of a deadly new mutation of bloodsucker, the Reapers), and grasping with both hands his "biggest opportunity yet" to break into the mainstream arena, to effectively "drop

the boy" after a largely forgettable sequence of minor roles and West End sing-alongs. "And I hope the diehard Bros fans will be proud of my performance too," Goss laughs. "Those guys are adults now, and I'm sure they've faced a bit of stick over the years, so hopefully this will be a bit of payback for them. You know, squaring off against Wesley was intimidating for sure, but I'd like to think I've acquitted myself the very best I can."

Indeed, if on paper the pairing is an unlikely one, the result is an unexpected triumph. "I mean, I can't say I'm a fan of the guy's music," laughs Snipes, the following day. "And I know that for you Brits, the idea of me versus Luke is strange. In fact, I guess the U.S. equivalent is like Justin Timberlake wanting a piece of me. But let me tell you,

"Batman? Blade would take that pussy's utility belt and spank his rubber clad ass with it!"



Jaws – fear the Reapers.



Blood to let – Blade's unlikely ally Nyssa (Leonor Varela).

The Art Of *Blade II* – Fangs and gore galore!

BIRTH OF A NOTION

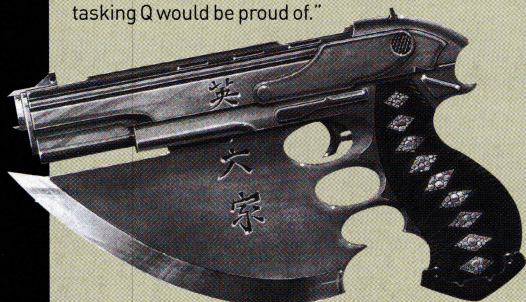
Guillermo Del Toro: "All of my movies begin life as a single sketch. With *Blade II*, my first image was of this vampire ninja, dressed in a black catsuit and infra-red goggles. I just thought it looked sexy."

David S. Goyer: "Vampire ninjas? See what I mean? The guy's a fucking visionary!"

GADGETS A GO-GO

Goyer: "The gadgets are an aspect of the series that Wesley has personally become very involved in. The booby-trapped sword from the first movie, for example, was a Wesley-ism. He loves all that 'big boys' toys' shit."

Del Toro: "My favourite gadget is the gun-machete (below). I mean, wow! That's multi-tasking Q would be proud of."



RE-VAMPING BLADE

Goyer: "As much as they inspired me when I was growing up, the original *Blade* comic books are now pretty dated and cheesy. Blade would say things like, 'Holy Christmas!' Plus, the guy looked like fucking Shaft! The first movie rectified that, but here we wanted to turn what was a damn cool outfit into one approaching super fucking cool."

Del Toro: "The comic never turned me on, either. The original Blade was a very opportunistic, unattractive character. He was a miserable fucker. So I was very wary of this project early on, but when I saw the concept was to move Blade away from the introspective, tortured soul of the first, and into someone who simply loved kicking vampire ass, I decided to face my demons."

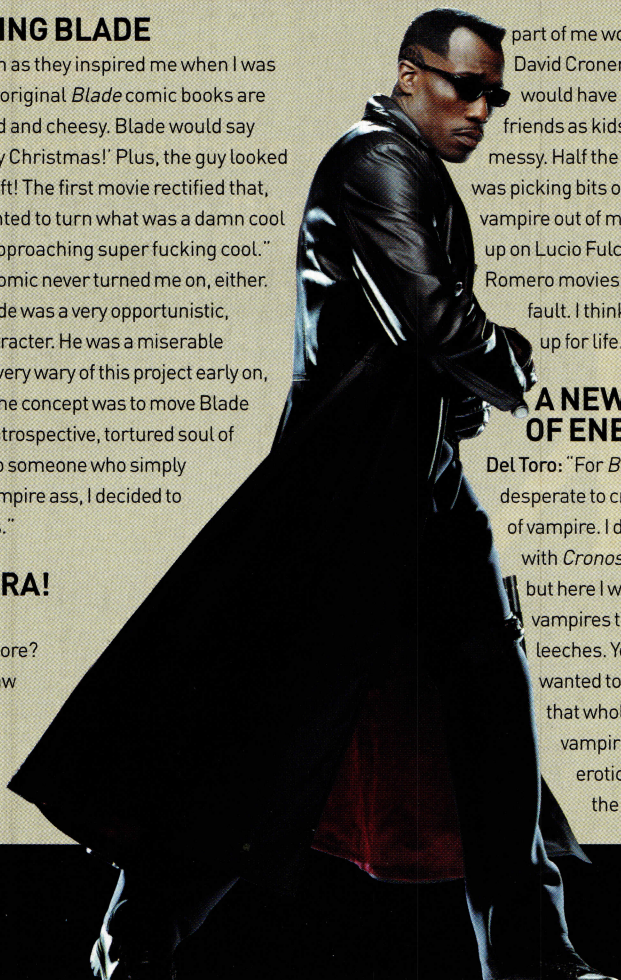
GORA! GORA! GORA!

Del Toro: "The gore? Well, I always saw this as a very Cronenberg-ian movie. Mainly because

part of me would like to think David Cronenberg and I would have been great friends as kids. *Blade II* is very messy. Half the time on set I was picking bits of exploded vampire out of my ear. But I grew up on Lucio Fulci and George A. Romero movies, so it's not my fault. I think they fucked me up for life."

A NEW BREED OF ENEMY

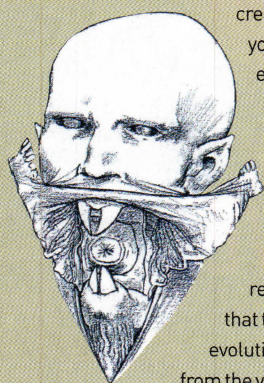
Del Toro: "For *Blade II*, I was desperate to create a new kind of vampire. I did one variation with *Cronos*, back in 1992, but here I wanted to create vampires that are more like leeches. You know, I wanted to get away from that whole idea of vampirism being an erotic exchange. So the Reapers are





Blade II – Snowman (Donnie Yen) gets a kick out of one of the Reapers.

Director **Guillermo Del Toro** and screenwriter-producer **David S. Goyer** reveal *Blade II*'s gore-drenched transition from sketch to screen.

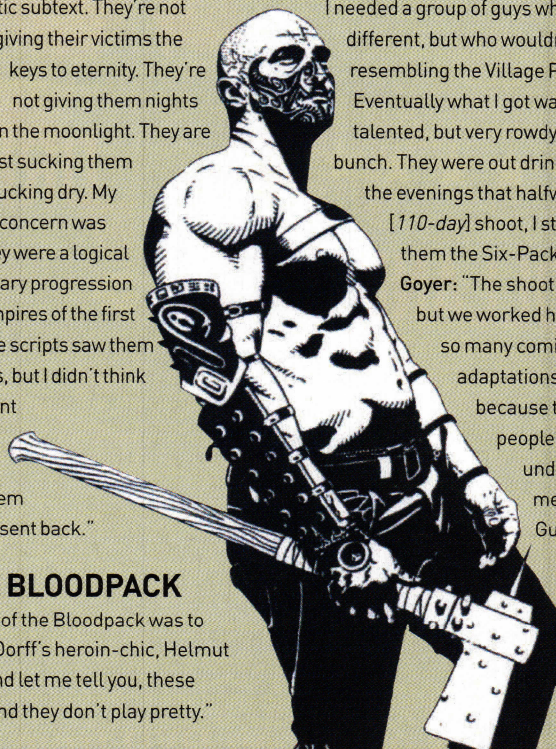


creatures designed solely to take your blood. That's it. There is no erotic subtext. They're not giving their victims the keys to eternity. They're not giving them nights in the moonlight. They are just sucking them fucking dry. My real concern was that they were a logical evolutionary progression from the vampires of the first movie. David's first three scripts saw them as shape-shifting things, but I didn't think that made sense, so I sent them back to him."

Goyer: "Oh yes, three fucking scripts. All of them serviceable. All of them sent back."

BRING ON THE BLOODPACK

Goyer: "The main point of the Bloodpack was to steer clear of Stephen Dorff's heroin-chic, Helmut Lang type of bad guy. And let me tell you, these guys don't look pretty and they don't play pretty."



Del Toro: "Actually, the six members of the Bloodpack were the hardest to cast, because I needed a group of guys who looked very different, but who wouldn't end up resembling the Village People. Eventually what I got was a very talented, but very rowdy, alcoholic bunch. They were out drinking so much in the evenings that halfway through the [110-day] shoot, I started calling them the Six-Pack!"

Goyer: "The shoot was a lot of fun, but we worked hard. The reason so many comic-book adaptations frankly suck is because they're made by people who don't understand the medium. Guillermo and I live it and love it. We know our shit, we've studied it. And it shows."

Luke trained with Donnie Yen for this, so you take a hit from him and you feel it alright." Naturally, being Blade, there were, and are, plenty of hits to be had. Unrelenting in its dedication to deliver the blend of breathtaking action and groundbreaking effects that fans have come to expect, the sequel is most definitely not for those of a weak disposition. The Reapers are an astounding concept realised with technological gusto, and the Bloodpack (the team of vampires formed explicitly to kill Blade) are definitely mean muthas; but for all the "colourful" supporting cast, this movie contains only one star.

Anyone in any doubt of that fact need only check the peacock strut of Wesley Snipes as he parades around L.A.'s painfully hip W Hotel in a pair of trademark sunglasses and a cream Armani suit that actually wouldn't have looked too far out of place on either Crockett or Tubbs. This is his moment, and Snipes is clearly loving every second of it. "Well, why not?" he asks. "This is a sequel to one of my movies we're talking about. No one has ever wanted to see a sequel to one of my movies before. Sometimes they never even wanted to see the first one." He laughs.

Blade, though, was different. Snipes



Vampire slaying made easy

1. Stake Almost universally applicable, though in *Dracula Has Risen From The Grave*, Christopher Lee survives a staking because the staker is an atheist who forgets to pray while wielding the mallet.

2. The crucifix Makes most vamps cringe in terror, though in *Dance Of The Vampires*, Jewish neck-biter Alfie Bass reacts with, "Oy vey, have you got the wrong vampire!" And *Legend Of The Seven Golden Vampires* suggests that a Buddha statue can see off vampires.

3. Running water Some vampires can't cross it – Christopher Lee drowns in *Dracula*, *Prince Of Darkness*. Lesser vampires in *Dracula A.D. 1972* are killed by a shower.



4. Garlic In *The Lost Boys*, a squeezed pizza is effective – though the strict Van Helsing rules insist that it's the flowers of the garlic plant that are lethal, not the food-seasoning.

5. As the cock crows Since *Nosferatu* in 1922, vampires have spurned sunlight. There are exceptions – in *Kiss Of The Vampire*, the vampires just prefer cloudy days. **Kim Newman**



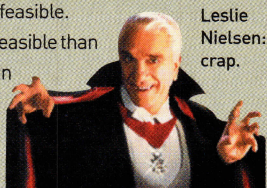
Wesley Snipes:
"Ultimately, I feel that
Blade is my baby."

Whistler Down The Wind:
Kris Kristofferson.

Fear the reapers?

VAMPIRE EVOLUTION "SILLY"

Could *Blade II*'s the Reapers really have evolved from long-toothed vamps to possess mouths that split open to reveal two huge fangs that plunge deeper and suck harder? Martin Llewellyn, an A-Level biology tutor in Oxford, tells all: "Vampires are the undead. If they did evolve, then it's pretty far away from the Darwinian ideas of evolution. But then, normal evolution doesn't apply to them." But would this change really be significant? "While it might make them more efficient hunters, it wouldn't move them up the food ladder necessarily. But it would bring an evolutionary advantage." So could vampires really evolve that quickly? Dr. Adrian Lister at University College, London, says there is evidence that speedy evolution can happen. "Some lake fishes have evolved in a hundred years, so it is quite feasible. In fact, it's no less feasible than vampires existing in the first place." Now you know. **Alex Ferguson**



Leslie
Nielsen:
crap.

describes the original 1998 comic-book adaptation, directed by Stephen Norrington, as a "pure shot in the dark". A solid theatrical hit, it was on video and DVD that Blade steadily built a distinct cult status. "And I think that's because what appealed to people about Blade was

Staking a claim – "This is a conscious move toward a greater quality of B-movie."

"The Bloodpack were difficult to cast. I didn't want them to end up looking like the Village People."

that the guy was a real super-hero," Snipes argues, "one that wasn't sugar-coated in any shape or form. He's a cool cat, but he's also one real tough dude."

"Could he take Batman?" Snipes asks rhetorically. "Are you kidding? Blade would take that pussy's utility belt and

spank his rubber-clad ass with it! Then he'd take his car! And then he'd strip it down, kit it out and put a decent sound system in it! No damn problem."

As for the Caped Crusader's box-office, Blade probably wouldn't mind having a pop at that, either. Viewed by Snipes – and his production company, AMENRA ("African Minors Engaged In Royal Affairs, man") – as a chance to build on the reputation of the first movie, this was a sequel that had a great deal riding on it from its very conception. Enlisting the services of celebrated Mexican horror maestro Guillermo Del Toro as director, the follow-up is, in fact, a conscious move toward a greater quality of B-movie. B+, if you like.

"There was a pressure to stick within certain guidelines," says Del Toro.

Luke Goss – fame at last.

Hot Goss-ip

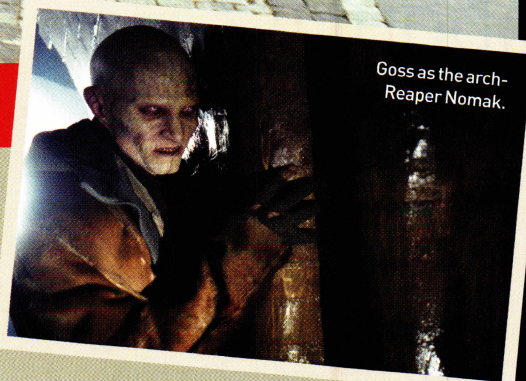
"When will I, will I be famous?" When a young peroxide-blond Luke Goss uttered those immortal words back in 1988, he couldn't have imagined he'd be where he is today. As part of the '80s pop sensation Bros, Luke was the object of affection for love-struck teen aged girls, but he was no actor-in-the-making. Things change though, and the conviction that Goss has shown in turning his career around is admirable. A long, hard slog on London's theatre stages has honed his skills and raised him far above the other pop stars who have tried to slip straight into acting.

Luke has the kind of drive that only comes as a result of putting in the hard yards, and knowing that he deserved to play the role. "I told the director to his face, I said 'look, I want this part'" comments Goss. "I'd had the script the night before and came up with a load of ideas. I'd already worked with Wesley before on another film but I was a big fan of *Blade*, so I wanted this role."

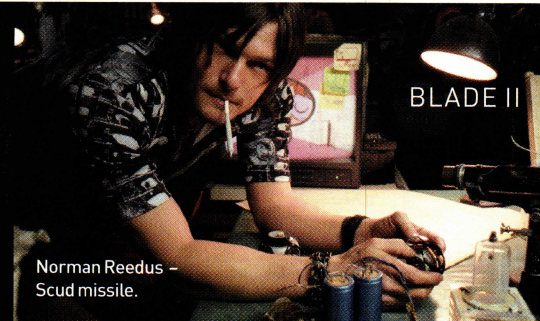
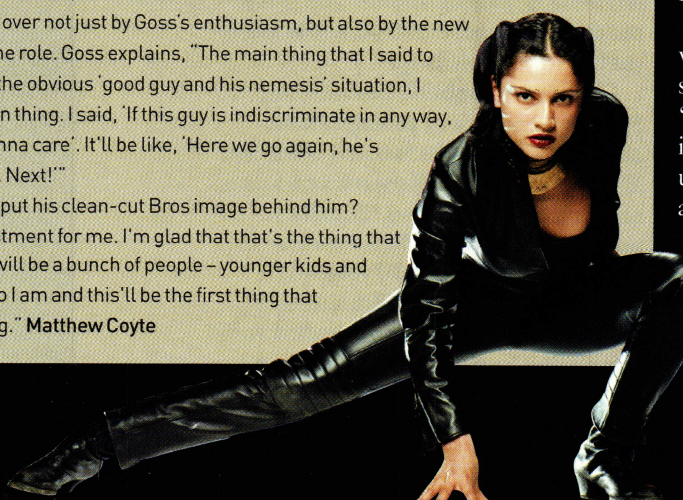
Guillermo Del Toro was won over not just by Goss's enthusiasm, but also by the new dimension that he brought to the role. Goss explains, "The main thing that I said to him was that, rather than play the obvious 'good guy and his nemesis' situation, I wanted to play on the father/son thing. I said, 'If this guy is indiscriminate in any way, it's gonna be crap. No one's gonna care'. It'll be like, 'Here we go again, he's gonna bite someone's head off. Next!'"

And does Goss feel that he's put his clean-cut Bros image behind him?

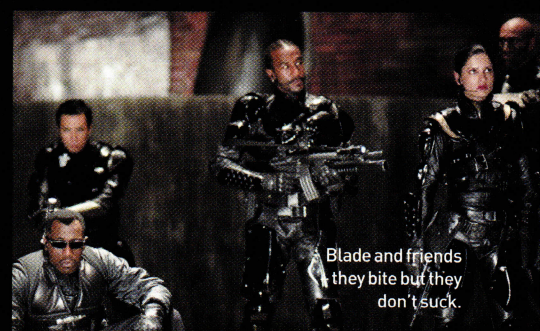
"He [*Nomak*] was a big investment for me. I'm glad that that's the thing that I've come back with, cos there will be a bunch of people – younger kids and guys who haven't got a clue who I am and this'll be the first thing that they'll see, which is a good thing." **Matthew Coyte**



Goss as the arch-Reaper Nomak.



Norman Reedus – Scud missile.



Blade and friends they bite but they don't suck.

"But the irony is that it's often from within constraints that the greatest originality can spring up. I wanted to take the logical next step with the *Blade* saga, but I also wanted to put my own thumb print on it. It made me think laterally about what I could achieve. It made me stretch."

Or, as Snipes puts it: "Guillermo and I set out our parameters from square one. He has his expertise and I have mine. He can build tension and suspense better than anyone I've worked with. That's what he does."

"Me, I know where *Blade*'s coming from. I know what goes on in that cat's head. So in terms of character progression, no body knows better than me. That's my thing,

"I was determined to up the bar on horror."

and no one else's.

"Ultimately, I feel *Blade* is my baby," Snipes continues, "as much as it is David's (S. Goyer, screenwriter and producer) and Stephen's and now Guillermo's. You know, could Arnold Schwarzenegger be a good *Blade*? Absolutely not. I just don't think he could pull the whole 'black thing' off. Could Stallone? No way. *Blade* is my guy; he's the man. And you can compare him with Batman if you like. You can even compare him with Bond. But he's a whole lot meaner and a whole lot better."

Except, perhaps, with the ladies. "Now, why you gotta bring that up, man?" Snipes sighs, hanging his head in mock shame. "That's just plain cruel." A glimmer of an idea pops into his head and he sits bolt upright, motioning frantically to his assistant. "Hey, quick, make a note will you? Whatever happens in Part 3, *Blade*'s gotta get some."

◆ *Blade II* is released nationally on July 11 and is reviewed on page 52.